

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

VLR 6/19/0
NRHP 9/12/0

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Whitewood High School

other names/site number Whitewood School, Whitewood Combined School; VDHR ID 013-5125

2. Location

street & number 17424 Dismal River Road

not for publication N/A

city or town Whitewood

vicinity N/A

state Virginia

code VA

county Buchanan

code 027

zip code 24657

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

McCart
Signature of certifying official

7/25/2008
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
- ☒ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
- ☐ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: High school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: vacant Sub: work-in-progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof Other: membrane
walls brick, concrete
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1940

Significant Dates 1940

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Smithey & Boynton, architects

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.26 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing

1 17 422660 4121895

Zone Easting Northing

2 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael J. Pulice, architectural historian

organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Roanoke Regional Office date March 2008

street & number 1030 Penmar Ave. SE telephone 540-857-7586

city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Buchanan County Industrial Development Authority, attn: Craig Horn

street & number PO BOX 1072 telephone 276-935-4003

city or town Grundy state VA zip code 24614

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Whitewood High School
Buchanan County, Virginia**

Section 7 Page 1

7. Summary Description

Whitewood High School, which later became a combined high school and elementary school serving grades 1-12, is a two-story brick building erected in 1940, with several brick additions of compatible design, dating to 1957. It includes a secondary, contributing building containing three additional classrooms. The architectural character of the larger facility is defined by the original 1940 section, in which Classical and Gothic-inspired elements are deftly combined with modern design elements and the use of modern materials such as pre-cast concrete. The school is the most prominent and significant architectural landmark in the Whitewood area of Buchanan County.

Detailed Description

Whitewood High School is located at the confluence of Dismal Creek and Linn Camp Branch in eastern Buchanan County, about seven miles west of the Tazewell County line. By road, the school is located near the intersection of Route 638, which follows Dismal Creek, and Route 635, which follows Linn Camp Branch. The school is surrounded by coal mines in close proximity. Both surface “strip” mines and subsurface “shaft” mines are shown within one-half mile of the school on USGS quad maps. The closest mine shaft appears on a hillside no more than three-tenths of a mile north of the school. Coal tipples are shown less than four-tenths of a mile south of the school on Route 638.

The school is a two-story steel frame building, constructed in sections, all with brick veneer, poured concrete foundation and a flat roof. The footprint of the original section measures approximately one hundred forty-two feet by ninety feet. It has a parapet, stepped up at the center of the front and side elevations, making the original block taller than the added wings. There is a concrete belt course along the top edge of the second story windows, dividing the parapet from the wall surface below. Above the belt course, within the parapet, are two rectangular classically-inspired concrete tablets. The architectural style of the school may be called Classical Revival or Georgian Revival, but there is some influence of the Collegiate Gothic style, as seen in the principal entrance surround on the façade, described in detail in the following paragraph. The original section of the school has banks of five, six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows on each level, and includes eight classrooms, a library, an office and a science laboratory. It has a set back, two-story wing on the south end, with similar banks of windows, and two story wings added to the rear, connected by one and two-story hyphens. The two-story rear wing houses the cafeteria and gymnasium, and features three tall, round-arched Palladian windows on the rear (west) elevation. The arches are formed of soldier bricks and have concrete keystones and impost caps. The sashes are metal. Alternating with the windows are two-story, concrete-capped buttresses simulating pilasters.

The principal entrance to the original two-story block is within a central pavilion projecting out about one foot from the façade, with a stepped parapet and concrete coping. Within the pavilion, the entrance is surrounded by a light colored concrete frontispiece with a stepped top, reaching nearly the full height of the building. The concrete surround consists of pre-cast tablets of several different dimensions. The joints between the tablets are very narrow, but intended to be visible, simulating dry-laid stone. Along both sides of the frontispiece are tablets incised with two vertical lines, laid end-to-end so that the lines are continuous from top to bottom of the frontispiece. Reached by a flight of five concrete steps or via the concrete handicap ramp, the double doors are within a recessed alcove with

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**Whitewood High School
Buchanan County, Virginia**

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brick-veneer interior walls. Both doors have nine lights in the top half and two recessed panels in the lower half. Over the doorway is a tall, six-light transom. Surmounting the recessed alcove and within the concrete surround is a single, large concrete tablet inscribed with formal, austere lettering spelling "WHITEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL 1940." Flanking the date inscription are decorative paterae. Above the inscribed tablet are a pair of six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows, and surmounting the windows is an embossed image of an open book, a symbol for learning, in the uppermost concrete tablet.

At the north (end) elevation of the school is a central, raised, stepped parapet with a concrete tablet in the center, surmounting a thirty-six-light steel sash window. At ground level, centered beneath the raised parapet is a recessed entrance alcove. The concrete belt course wraps around from the front to the side elevations. The flat wall surfaces, below the belt course are ornament with rectangular, flush panels defined by soldier and stretcher bricks delineated by thicker than average mortar joints and cast concrete accent blocks at the corners. Bordering the foundation and door and window headers are additional soldier brick courses. At the northwest corner of the building is a massive brick chimney, extending well above the roof of the building.

The main school building is currently vacant, a result of county school consolidation, and is in only fair condition due to breaches in the roof membrane, but has had very little alteration since its construction. The interior preserves its basic plan of classrooms, which retain their original lighting fixtures, chalkboards, hardwood floors, and cabinetry. Throughout much of the school the wall surfaces consist of shiny, enameled ceramic blocks from the floor to about 4 four feet high, and painted, common concrete block from four feet above the floor to the top of the wall.

There is a one-story, three-room ancillary building, built of concrete block on a poured concrete foundation in 1947. It is located off of the northwest corner of the school, beside the parking lot. Its footprint measures 96 feet by 23 feet. The side gable roof was originally covered with composition shingles, but now is covered with V-crimp sheet metal roofing. Today a single interior brick chimney flue pierces the roof, but an old photo shows that there were two originally. Inside are three classroom spaces, each of which has its own exterior entrance on the front elevation. Over the entrances are original wooden canopies with sheet metal roofing. Each room is lighted by bands of five hopper windows with six lights arranged vertically. The floors are of original hardwood. The building has no plumbing. In good condition and still in use by a local senior citizens group, it is considered a contributing building for the purposes of this nomination.

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**Whitewood High School
Buchanan County, Virginia**

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8. Statement of Significance Summary

Whitewood High School, in the far southwestern Virginia county of Buchanan, was designed by the firm of Smithey and Boynton in 1939-40, constructed in 1940, and opened its doors the following year. It was an up-to-date high school with many modern amenities. In 1975, the school was divided into an elementary school, K-7th grades, and a high school, grades 8-12. Although now vacant, like the other county schools from the period, it stands today as perhaps the best preserved survival among its counterparts, an important vestige of the educational, social history of the Whitewood Community and the architectural history of the region. It was among the first high schools built in the county, where grades 1-7 had previously represented the sum total of education opportunities for young people. Because of the high quality of instruction they received at the school, many former students went on to become extraordinarily successful in a number of fields. It also fulfilled an important role in the civic life of the community for generations of students, and for their families whose social lives centered there. Accounts of student and community life at Whitewood School present solid testimony for its educational and social importance. As the only public building dedicated to community use in the Whitewood area, the school grounds have been used for a wide range of social functions, community activities, and athletic events. The school building meets National Register criteria under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, for its rich architectural design and construction, and its association with the regionally-prominent architects Smithey and Boynton, prolific designers of public schools in Virginia. The school is nominated as significant at the local level.

Acknowledgements

Whitewood resident Belinda Honaker has been the driving force in seeking this designation, and she continues to be the leading advocate for preservation and re-use of the long-neglected school building. She also provided sources of the historical information contained herein, and helped with the nomination process. Virginia Department of Historic Resources staff members Jean McRae, Kelly Spradley-Kurowski, and Quatro Hubbard also provided valuable assistance.

Historical Background

Currently and historically a center of activity by coal mining operations, Buchanan County is today Virginia's largest producer of coal. It is characterized by its remote, mountainous topography and sparse human population. In recent decades the economy has suffered due to the boom and bust nature of the coal and timber industries, but it flourished during the second quarter of the 20th century, a period in which a number of significant public schools were erected. The coal mining and logging industries in Buchanan County prospered between 1930 and 1940. During this period the county population almost doubled, from 16,740 to 31,477.¹

In May, 1930, R. L. Humbert, Director of Surveys, Engineering Extension Division, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, prepared the document, "Industrial Survey: Buchanan County Virginia." The document included information on civic refinements, educational facilities and public schools, reporting, "Buchanan County is extremely mountainous and sparsely settled and thus has been called upon to solve educational problems unknown to many counties of the state." The survey offers insight into the county's educational system and facilities in place during the late 1920's, listing 59

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one-room schools, 21 two-room schools, 3 three-room schools, 2 four-room schools, and 1 six-room school. In a county served primarily by one-room schools, two schools stood out as exemplary: Triangular Mountain Institute and Grundy High School, reporting that a substantial two-story brick structure, known as Grundy High School, was recently erected at Grundy. "This structure is modern in design, is well-equipped, and is the only accredited senior high school in the county." Grundy High School included an auditorium for 400 and 14 classrooms. Whitewood High School was built according to the same concept, and reflected a similar education philosophy as Grundy High School.

Opened in 1941, Whitewood High School provided education for rural students and significant numbers of its graduates went on to pursue higher education, accomplish distinguished careers. Some returned as professional and community leaders in the rural communities of central Appalachia. Whitewood was among the first schools in Buchanan County that featured specialized classroom space utilized for a library and a science laboratory. When it opened, it had nine classrooms, a small home economics room and a small principal's office. The school was also built to serve as a public school with rooms providing assembly spaces that served as community centers for rural life.

The Buchanan County School Board purchased the property for the school from C. L. Ritter Lumber Co. for \$1900 in 1939.² Ritter had owned the parcel since 1900. The cost of building the school was \$68,500.³ Enrollment numbers were very low the first year. Students came from other schools in the region, including Jewell Valley, Florence Cole, Laurel Creek, Horn Mountain, Spruce Pine, Hale Creek, and "the Log Cabin School." Three seniors who had come from another high school graduated the first year. The extant ancillary building off of the northwest corner of the school was built in 1947 at a cost of \$7,789.⁴

Around 1957, a large two-story wing was added to the south end of the school, and a cafeteria extension at the rear of the existing building, for a cost of nearly \$400,000. One of the original classrooms was adapted into a library. Kindergarten and special education programs were instituted in some of the new spaces. In 1967, seven mobile buildings were added to the school campus to increase the overall size of the facility. Most housed makeshift classrooms. These mobile facilities have long since been removed to an unknown location.⁵

By 1970, the student body reached 780 pupils, instructed by 38 faculty members and 6 teacher aides. There was an assistant principal, a secretary, 5 cooks, and 5 janitors. The curriculum encompassed vocational training and a college preparatory program, as well as technical training. The school was divided into an elementary school, K-7th grades, and a high school, grades 8-12, in 1975. A new principal was hired to oversee the elementary school only. The first principal was J. E. Keen, followed by Bobby G. Ashby. Between 1940 and 1991, the high school had 4 principals: George Pollard, William Munsey, George R. Bird, and R. David Rowlett, who served from 1969-1991. The peak enrollment reached 350 high school students and 625 elementary school students. The Jewell Ridge Coal Company provided rooms and facilities for the teachers at a reasonable price and was noted for its excellent food and homelike atmosphere.⁶

Among the community activities held at the school were plays performed by the senior class every year since 1948. The plays were usually comedies, which helped the populations, mostly employed by the coal mines, during trying times. During WWII, scrap iron drives were done by the students, who collected the materials and brought them back to the school. The school also served as the local fallout shelter during the Cold War. The school was used for

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numerous clubs and community organizations, political meetings and community gatherings. The school newspaper, "The Smoke Signal," was popular in the community. In it was school news, community news including reports on the health of the ill and aged, poems, and words of encouragement. Many of the newspapers have been preserved by a former graduate and later a teacher, Mr. Lonnie White. When members of the military returned home to the area, they often came to the school to speak to the students. Students also received their vaccinations in the school office.⁷

In 1977, a terrible flood swallowed the community of Whitewood and many low-lying areas of the county. Because of the region's mountainous terrain, all of the public schools and indeed, most of the buildings in Buchanan County were affected by the flood. A newspaper clipping from the time quoted the county superintendent of schools, James Moon, stating that Whitewood Elementary was among four schools with the most extensive damage. Students throughout the area missed many days of school.⁸

The architects of Whitewood High School, Smithey & Boynton of Roanoke, VA were highly accomplished at the time the school was designed. [Copies of their architectural drawings for Whitewood School can be found in DHR archives.] Louis Philippe Smithey (1890-ca.1955) was the senior architect. The firm also employed architect William Greene Chester for many years. Chester is given credit for much of the firm's design work in the 1940s and 1950s. Most of the office records of Smithey and Boynton from 1922 through 1955 are deposited in Special Collections at the Virginia Tech Library. Smithey, and Smithey & Boynton are credited for designing several large facilities in western Virginia including Clearbrook High School in Roanoke County (1938), Salem High School, City of Salem, (1933), and Covington High School (1939); as well as the recently demolished Victory Stadium in Roanoke (1942).⁹

Endnotes

1. U. S. Population census for Buchanan County, 1930 & 1940.
2. Deed dated September 2, 1939. Buchanan County Deed Book No. 82, page 35.
3. Buchanan County Fire & Insurance record, June, 1954.
4. Ibid.
5. Baker, *A Bicentennial History*, 33.
6. Information from various untitled, undated sources in vertical files, in possession of Belinda Honaker, Whitewood, Virginia.
7. Hobert Honaker, class of 1952.
8. Stevens, MaryAnne, "Schools: McDowell Opens All But 6; Buchanan Out Indefinitely."
9. Wells & Dalton, *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955*. Note: The Wells & Dalton book does not list Whitewood High School among Smithey and Boynton's commissions.

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Whitewood High School
Buchanan County, Virginia

Section 9 Page 6

9. Bibliographical References

Baker, Nancy Virginia. *Bountiful and Beautiful: A Bicentennial History of Buchanan County Virginia 1776-1976*. Printed by Buchanan County Vocational School.

Buchanan County Fire & Insurance record, June, 1954. Buchanan County School Board, Grundy, Virginia.

Honaker, Belinda. "Whitewood Highschool Preliminary Information Form," submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in November, 2006.

Honaker, Hobert, Whitewood Highschool class of 1952. Personal communication with Belinda Honaker, November, 2006.

Humbert, R.L. "Industrial Survey: Buchanan County Virginia." Director of Surveys, Engineering Extension Division, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, VA, May, 1930.

McCleary, Ann. "Public Schools in Augusta County, Virginia, 1870-1940." National Register of Historic Places, thematic nomination report, 1984. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia, VDHR File 07-1175.

Smithey and Boynton. Architectural drawings of Whitewood High School, 1940. Buchanan County School Board, Grundy, Virginia.

Stevens, MaryAnne, "Schools: McDowell Opens All But 6; Buchanan Out Indefinitely." Undated newspaper clipping from unknown local newspaper, 1977.

Wells, John E. & Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects 1835- 1955: A Biographical Dictionary*, Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1997, 421-423.

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Whitewood High School
Buchanan County, Virginia

Section 10, Photographic Data Page 7

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel encompasses Whitewood High School and the playground/recreational space around it, and the parking lot at the north end of the property. The parcel is hemmed by Linn Camp Branch on the north side, Dismal Creek along its western boundary, and county road 638 on the east and south side. The boundary is the 4.26 acres known by Buchanan County as tax parcel map #1HH-068-025 as referred to in Deed Book 565, page 227.

Boundary Justification

The NRHP boundary of the nominated property, shown on accompanying USGS quad map and GIS-produced aerial image, outlines the historic Whitewood High School land parcel, dating to 1939.

Photographs

All photographs of:

Whitewood High School, Buchanan County, Virginia [DHR ID 013-5125]

Date: February, 2007

Photographer: Michael J. Pulice

Location of digital images: DHR archives, Richmond, VA

1. Exterior, facing south
2. Exterior, (front) main entrance, facing west
3. Exterior, facing northeast
4. Exterior, rear elevation, facing north
5. Exterior, rear elevation, facing east
6. Interior, library
7. Ancillary building, facing SW

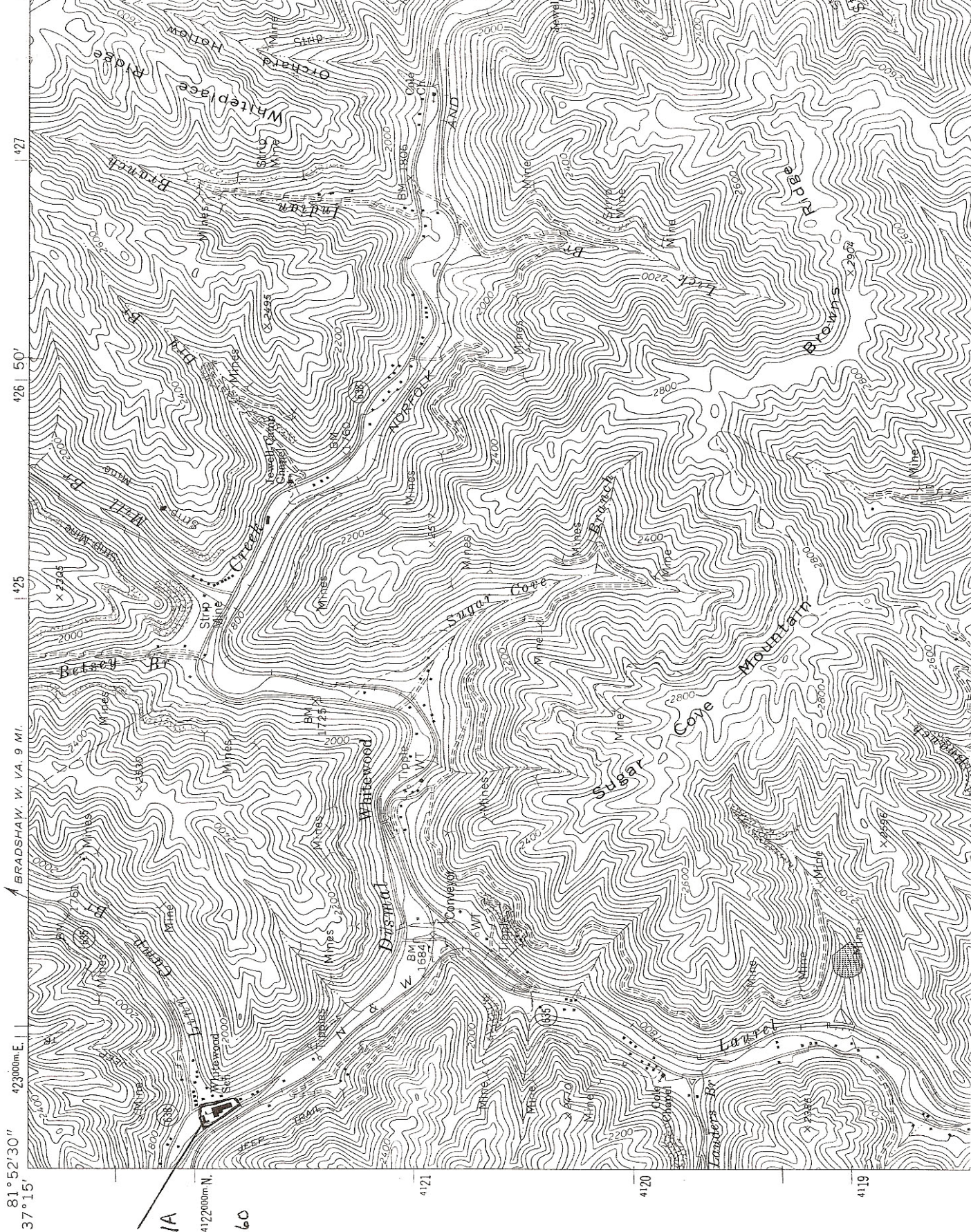
Enclosed historic photographs, taken in 1940, photographer unknown.

8. Exterior, facing northwest
9. Exterior, facing west

4668 IV SW
(PATTERSON)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH
DIVISION OF
JAMES L. CAL



WHITEWOOD
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UTMS:
17/4121895/422660